Make It Count

October 1, 2008

Never before in the 26-year history of the AIDS pandemic have we had the need, opportunity and momentum for critical change that we face right now. On November 4, we'll do more than help fellow citizens elect our next president (and other representatives). The HIV community will help determine the future history of AIDS in America. Now's the time to make our voices heard. It's time to call out and change history.

AIDS apathy is at an all-time high, while funding for, media coverage of and public interest in HIV are at all-time lows. Today there are more people than ever living with HIV in the United States—more than 1 million of us, with 25 percent unaware of our status. In 2006, more than 14,000 people died of AIDS and 56,300 contracted the virus. This year, waiting lists cropped up again at AIDS Drug Assistance Programs (ADAP). An increasing number of positive people can't pay for treatment because they've fallen into the "doughnut hole" between ADAP and Medicare coverage. Many others are too frightened of stigma, discrimination or criminalization to come forward and seek care. We are struggling to find effective approaches to prevention; important microbicide and vaccine trials failed in the last year; and insurance and pharmaceutical companies and governments around the world struggle to provide treatment to those who need it. The travel ban on HIV-positive foreigners coming into the United States has been lifted, but as POZ goes to press, HIV remains on the Department of Health and Human Services' list of communicable diseases and remains a potential reason for keeping positive people from entering the so-called land of the free.

Oh yes, and we have no National AIDS Strategy.

The state of AIDS in America is atrocious, and yet a common misperception holds that AIDS is "under control" in the United States.

Which is why we—the more than three-quarters of a million people living with HIV in America who know our HIV status—must stand up and make our voices heard loud and clear.

Two ways you can make a difference:

Vote

Cast your vote for the candidate(s) who will represent your needs on Capitol Hill. If you're not registered to vote, visit rockthevote.com to get a voter registration form or call your local county

elections office and ask them to mail you one.

Join NAPWA

A membership at the National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA) guarantees the issues affecting HIV-positive people don’t go unheard. NAPWA is inarguably changing the way politics “treats” HIV. Help ensure that our leaders hear you. Become a member at napwa.org.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/government-AIDS-15324-9739